

## (NanoDesu) A Translation of the Goshujinsama wa Yamaneko-hime Light Novel

We're sort of in the processes of typesetting/looking for better scans. These will be updated with English text soon!



Translations are from right to left:

### The Problem Child, “Wildcat” – SHAN KUM MINE

“What, you’re giving up already?”

“You beat me. Please, please let me go.”

“For heaven’s sake, you’re hopeless as a man! Suck it up, try a little harder!”

“You’re asking the impossible... running across the ceiling... it’s not normal.”

“Oh, really?”

“...Truly. For most people...”

“Mu. Why are you mad at me? I did nothing wrong.”

Nothing wrong, she says! How about “everything”?

### **Extremely Unlucky Royal Tutor – SEN’YA SEIRIN**

Untitled-2

*Translations are from right to left:*

“Ufufufu. I’m so glad to catch you here.”

“Oh, good. I’m so not.”





“Ara, being coy, aren’t we? That’s so adorable ”

“Men are not adorable!”

“Oh my. Did I say something wrong?”

“You did!”

“Hmm, I see. Well, why don’t I prove it to you?”

“Hey, wait! Why are you touching me there?!”

“Ufufufu. Even more adorable.”

“Hands off! Hands off of me right now!”

**A mysterious woman chasing after Fusetatsu – ANGYUTNUSS IRENE**

**A former child genius – KOU FUSETATSU**



*Translations are from right to left:*

“Seirin!”

“Stay back!”

“But—”

“Everything will be alright. Just do as I say, okay?”



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## Volume 1: The “Borderland Hero-Wannabe” Arc

### Prologue

Summer wind blew through the streets of a little town called Tart on the northern border of the Engi Empire. As the merchant caravan rolled into the town, Seirin took a deep breath and smelled the lilacs.

The wife of the first emperor loved this sweet smell and so by her order hundreds of lilac bushes were planted throughout the main street of the capital, about 200 years ago. Ever since, lilacs had been a symbol of the empire, and it became traditional to grow them in every city under its rule.

Moreover, So Heikei, savior of the state who alone stopped a horde of Shimur nomadic tribes during the Northern Plague, was rumored to have used a bow made from a lilac branch. Since then, lilacs became indispensable as the representation of Northern province’s Guardian Deity.

The caravan stopped in Tart’s central square, and Seirin disembarked. After a long stretch he thoughtfully regarded the nearest lilac bush.

*It hasn’t even been 10 years since Tart became a part of Engi Empire and yet lilacs are in full bloom already*, he remarked to himself. They were probably delivered straight from the capital, fully grown.

The Engi planted these trees as a display of power for the Shimur tribes living nearby: Look, it’s within our abilities to move the trees all the way from the Capital before they wither away. We are *that* efficient, understand?

“If anything happens an army can be transported just as easily. You barbarians get the hint and realize what would happen if you tried going against us, yes?” The bush that currently held Seirin’s attention seemed to imply this by its very existence.

Suddenly somebody called out to Seirin from behind. “Oi, youngster. Move! We’re trying to unpack the cart, and you’re in the way!”

He hurriedly stepped aside and saw a group of brawny men pass by, heavy-looking cloth bags on their backs.

As they passed, a strong smell tickled at the young man’s nose, not unlike the odour of dried fish. It hung all over the place, intermingling with the flowery aroma of lilacs. Salt. It was definitely salt. Nothing else smelled quite like this.

So, the men who pushed past him earlier were probably salt traders. This certainly would explain the sack carriers and the man with a ledger chasing after them.

The state had a monopoly on salt in the Engi Empire. If the amount stated in the ledger and the number of sacks sent from the Capital didn’t match, merchants’ heads would quite literally fly. Naturally, such traders tended to look rather grave.

Not to mention that for the town of Tart, far from the sea and thus without access to a reliable supply, salt was an inarguably precious commodity.

*Right now salt production is thriving in southern cities, so prices are lower, thought Seirin. But salt was once worth its weight in copper, or so I heard from an old man in Nishiki koji market. Speaking of which...*

"You can survive without money, but you'll die if you don't eat any salt. Without it, everybody becomes unable to move, be it humans, horses or oxen." *That's why salt is so expensive... According to that old man, anyway.*

There were people other than traders gathered around the imperial caravan. Various groomsmen and labourers with their handlers hurried to and fro, shouting in their strange language.

"○ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ!"

"ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ!"

The hustle-and-bustle of the crowd, rapid conversations in barbaric Northern dialects – all of this reminded Seirin of the capital's marketplace.

"...just like Nishiki Koji..." the young man muttered subconsciously.

Born and raised in the capital, Seirin's favourite playground was the city's biggest bazaar, Nishiki koji. It was a place of exotic goods and fruit stands lined the streets, foreign merchants managing the stalls... A place that was filled with the sounds of foreign chatter and music, everything so new to the eyes, so different. There were shops that had stood there forever and shops that changed by the day; nasty owners who kicked you out of their shops and others who gave you fruit for free with a friendly smile.

...And maybe there were also some people who behaved kindly because they understood that he come from a wealthy family.

Looking over Tart's shabby streets, Seirin sighed despondently.

Along the dusty road were two rows of mismatched houses made from ochre-colored dried brick. One building had a roof covered with black tiles in imperial fashion; it was probably a governor-general's residence. Aside from a watch tower on top of a castle wall, there were no tall buildings or even shrine towers. And far away behind the town walls a white-capped mount Reihou could be seen towering above everything.

If you asked one hundred men from the capital if that's what they pictured when they thought of the borderlands, one hundred and ten would say yes.

Meaning, everything here screamed "backwater" so loudly, you didn't have to imagine anything.

*Gods, how I want to return to the capital...*

Although only a few minutes had passed since Seirin arrived, he was already feeling homesick.

And that was when somebody called out to him from behind. "You are master Sen'ya Seirin, aren't you?"

When Seirin turned around, he saw an unremarkable man in his thirties, of average build and height. Judging by his dress he was a lowly ranked official from the governor's office.

"Y-yes, that's me."

"Good. His Excellency the governor is waiting. Please follow me." The official-looking man nodded and started

walking again.

“What? Oh, yes. But I’ve just arrived, what about my baggage..?”

“I’ll tell them to deliver your things to the Seikin governmental dorms, as you’ll be living there from now on.”

“A-ah, uh, yes. Sorry for all the trouble.”

With a slight bow of his head Seirin tried voicing some of his doubts. “But, um... You’ve recognized me almost immediately...”

The official smiled. “Well, it’s easy. You capital dwellers all just stand looking tearfully towards the capital... So when I see someone like that, it’s not hard to tell where they’re from.”

*So it wasn’t only me.* Sighing once more, Seirin followed the official to the governor’s office.

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## **Volume 1: The “Borderland Hero-Wannabe” Arc**

### **Chapter 1: First Job, Part 1/2**

Like in the capital, the administration building in Tart was painted vermillion to keep the wood from decaying. There was some shrubbery growing around, but nothing big enough to be used for the construction purposes.

*The roof tiles and other materials were probably brought from the capital*, Seirin mused as he waited in the antechamber. His guide then stepped back into the room. He was dressed the same way as before, except he now had two golden cords hanging from his shoulders. These cords, made of silk thread, were worn by every official on active duty. He had a serious atmosphere about him now.

With a slight bow, he said, “His Excellency is calling for you. Please come in.”

Seirin followed the official inside the building. To think that he would have a chance to meet the famous Tsukihara Genzai in person! It was beyond his wildest dreams.

Back in the capital, Seirin would have been lucky to catch a glimpse of him from afar, but here in Tart he could not only meet the man himself, but even get a chance to work for him. If only for this, taking a trip to such a backwater town was worth it! ...Why else would anybody willingly come here?

Passing through a hallway Seirin recalled a portrait of Tsukihara Genzai he’d seen before, in his capital-dwelling days.

By imperial order, Tsukihara Genzai was both the head of the Northern Province and the governor of Tart. He was known throughout the empire as a capable official who had been in charge of internal affairs during the previous emperor’s reign. He had also served as the late emperor’s right hand man.

After the previous emperor’s death five years ago, it seemed to be fairly obvious that he would be chosen to serve as the young heir’s guardian. At the time nobody doubted that Tsukihara Genzai would be a great regent and lead the country to prosperity.

Unfortunately, it was not to be so. The widowed Empress You’s father Komono Shingen became the acting regent instead.

The circumstances surrounding this decision were unclear, but as a result, regent candidate Tsukihara Genzai was given the rank of Provincial Governor and exiled to the town of Tart, which was still under the control of Shimur nomads then.

As they’d been at war with the “northern savages” for a hundred years at that point, the motive behind those orders was fairly clear.

Had the government executed Tsukihara Genzai or thrown him in prison, it would have caused a country-wide rebellion, considering how popular he was throughout the empire. But if he died at the hands of the Shimur, well....



However, Tsukihara Genzai didn't die. In fact, he managed to sway one of the twelve Shimur clans to Empire's side. To the surprise and eternal gratitude of empire citizens, he managed to overcome the century-old animosity between the Engi Empire and Shimur tribes with his first-rate diplomatic skills.

That was Tsukihara Genzai. A man who was famous not only in the Empire, but outside its borders as well.

And he, Sen'ya Seirin, would get to this man. Maybe he would even wind up working for him. Various fantasies swirled through Seirin's head.

When he returned to the capital he could boast: "Who? Tsukihara Genzai? Of course I know him. He was my boss, after all."

*Ah, how cool it'll be to offhandedly say things like that! I'll be popular with people of all ages. Very popular! Perhaps so popular that people will treat me to drinks when I go to a tavern and pretty flower girls at the market will give me bouquets for free... Smiling shyly they'll ask me for a story or two...*

The delusions running through Seirin's mind were not to be underestimated. Of course, he was an ordinary youngster and not at all well-versed in stuff like politics and economics. But even a kid like him believed that these fantasies could become reality. Such was the power of Tsukihara Genzai's influence.

So it was only natural that Seirin felt utterly elated as he walked through the hallways towards Tsukihara Genzai's cabinet.

\*

It was now thirty minutes later and Seirin was disappointed.

The man on the other side of the table was currently reading through Seirin's recommendation letter. And he looked absolutely ordinary, like any other forty-something man in the world.

*It's not like I was expecting some muscular giant or someone with a razor-sharp stare, but... How should I put it... He looks like an old geezer.*

*Is this old man really Tsukihara Genzai? I mean, he resembles the portrait I saw in the capital, but ... What if he's an imposter?*

The man probably finished reading the papers while Seirin was contemplating this. He put the letter down with a faint thump and watched Seirin from out of the corner of his eye.

"Sen'ya Seirin. Nineteen years old," he recited. "The third son born to the Sen'ya clan branch family of loyal imperial retainers. Has two older half-brothers. Father remarried after his first wife died. Terrible at physical activities and martial arts, almost as bad at studying.

"Instead of learning, he went to play at the market, and took a liking to conversing with foreign merchants. Can now speak various languages and dialects.

"But in the capital people look down on foreign languages, calling them "barbaric", so when Seirin uses his skills at home, he gets scolded by his father.

"Mother, a descendant of borderland royalty, protected him from father's wraith, but she died two years ago.

"Father, a high-ranking official. Eldest son, a captain of the Right Army. Entered military service because of his physical strength. Second eldest, passed the civil service examination. Following in his father's footsteps, became a

governmental official.

“But you failed the examination repeatedly. Without paying any attention to your lessons, you spent your days wandering around markets and chatting with your merchant friends.

“Am I right so far?”

Wide-eyed, Seirin gaped at him wordlessly.

Everything Genzai said was true, after all. But that wasn't what was written in the recommendation letter Seirin had with him.

Tsukihara Genzai smirked. “What's with you? And here I thought they weren't lying about your language skills.”

“N-no?” Seirin squeezed out. “E-everything is as you've said. That's the truth.” Pale-faced, he nodded weakly.

Seeing this, Genzai continued speaking. His words were unhurried.

“Now you're probably wondering how I know everything, even though there's no mention of it in your documents. Yes, there's no such information in the papers. They were written by a secretary, after all, so they're packed with flowery language.

“But a truly competent governmental official doesn't do his job according to what's written in some document. The real job is in reading between the lines. Anyone who can't do this will only be crushed under the weight of his own paperwork. ...And that's all I have to say on the matter.”

He put his elbows on the desk, staring at Seirin above the linked fingers.

“Two weeks ago I sent a request to the capital: ‘There aren't enough people. Please send somebody.’ If I was hiring as head of Northern province, you would have needed official qualifications. But as it happens, I put in the request as the governor of Tart, so there are no such limitations. ‘Just send somebody capable, I have no use for incompetent workers,’ I told them.

“And now you are here before me. So, I have to ask... Can I use you? What are you capable of?”

Genzai's eyes glittered sharply. Contrary to Seirin's first impression this stare was deadly, devastatingly serious.

Seirin wanted to cry.

There was nothing he could do. No proper qualifications, no formal schooling. He hated studying and had spent all his days at the market square imitating merchants. He'd actually earned pocket money working as a shop clerk many times, without ever telling his parents.

But there was nothing he could be proud of, nothing he could admit to freely.

He wanted to run away. He was feeling nauseous from the thought of his own naïve belief that he could get hired easily with only a recommendation letter.

*I'm sorry, so very sorry. I was too foolish. I'll let go of my ambition and return to lead a quiet life in the capital as the loser I really am.*

Seirin just wanted to bow his head, say the words and run away.

In response to Seirin's forlorn expression, Genzai smiled. “What happened? Haven't you come here from far away just for the opportunity to get employed by me? I shall ask once more: what can you do?”

Seirin raised his head. He had a feeling that Genzai was giving him a second chance.

*Yes, you are an aimless youngster without any qualifications,* he seemed to be saying. *But don't you have something you are proud of?*

That's right. Even if it's no good, I'm already here. So there's nothing left to do but confess everything without reserve. Decision made, Seirin raised his head and straightened his back.

"I know how to interpret! Since my childhood I've been running around the marketplace, so I've heard many people speaking many different languages and I can speak them all too, now!

"Southern dialect, Western dialect, Randaru language from overseas and, most importantly, languages of the Shimur tribes, who live here on the northern border. I know I can speak it! And I dare to think that this ability will be useful to Your Excellency Tsukihara Genzai as well!"

For a few minutes Genzai was silent, but then he stood up and smiled. "Very well. If that's what you are capable of, I have no objections. As the governor of Tart, I am now hiring you.

"...Before you, there were a lot of people who all said the same thing. 'I will do anything you need,' they claimed, but what they could do I never heard.

"What you will do and what you can do are different things. What you can do, you do and you have results to show for your efforts.

"But people who say they'll do anything can usually perform only basic tasks. I don't want a novice, I want a professional. So I have high hopes for you. Show me what you can do."

"Yes!"

*I did it! I passed! I am now one of His Excellency's subordinates! A superior is like a father to his subordinates, and they are like children to him! When I return to the capital I shall be very popular, ve-ery popular! Oh, how I want to see the surprised faces of my father and brothers, who always looked down on me!*

But in reality, there was no time for Seirin to celebrate his new employment. With a serious face, Genzai spoke again.

"As you probably know, this land was under Shimur's control for a long time. And so the Empire has fought Shimur for it for a hundred years already. But nothing comes out of war. Both sides are tired of the endless fighting.

"If fathers and brothers are not drafted and instead able live together with their families, then there will be more workers, and families will prosper.

"If families begin to prosper, more children will be born. More people will buy goods from merchants. Merchants will prosper and in turn begin to sell even more goods. So the artisans prosper, as do packhorse drivers. Nobody is unhappy.

"The Empire and its people need these peaceful days more than anything else in the world. To protect a country is to care about its citizens. You don't send them to war. That's what I've always thought. So five years ago I used my promotion as a chance to open peace talks with the Shimur tribes.

"Of course, they didn't listen to me at first. In their eyes I was a man who'd killed their fathers, their brothers, their ancestors. But I persisted in my negotiations while opening trade with them, and finally succeeded in signing a peace treaty with the Shan tribe. They chose to become Engi's ally while still upholding Shimur laws..."

Genzai broke off his speech to fish one paper out from the pile of documents on his desk.

"It's not the first time a borderland ruler has allied himself with the Engi empire. Usually it means that a king or someone from his family must go to the imperial court to swear an oath of friendship in an official ceremony. That should be the end of the matter. But this time the court demands for a daughter of the Shan tribe's chief to act as the emperor's concubine as proof of the alliance.

"I can guess why they would request this. The Empire doesn't want this alliance. To be exact, they don't want me to succeed. They're trying to destroy everything I've been working for."

Seirin couldn't stop himself from asking, "So does that mean the alliance failed? And the peace talks as well?"

Genzai shook his head.

"No. Thankfully, Shan's chief Ishil agreed to these unreasonable conditions. However, of his five daughters, four are already engaged. He agreed to offer his youngest child, a thirteen-year-old girl."

"Then everything turned out to be alright, didn't it?"

"Yes, hopefully that will be the end of Empire's illogical demands... But the real problem is..." Genzai cut himself off and looked at Seirin.

*I have a bad feeling about this.*

"The real problem is that Ishil's youngest, Princess Mine, was spoiled unconditionally while growing up, so she's a willful, disobedient child.

"As a nomad, she can't speak our language. She knows nothing about manners or common sense. If you'll allow me to be frank... She's like a wildcat in human disguise."

Nodding to himself, Genzai patted Seirin on his left shoulder.

"So that's where you come in, Seirin-kun. I want you to use your language skills to teach Princess Mine imperial speech, common sense, and etiquette.

"Her rooms are in a different building in the southern part of the residence. The rules are the same as in the Inner Palace, so men aren't usually allowed to enter, but I am going to give you a special permit as her tutor. Eight months from now she is having an audience with the Emperor. Until then it's your job to turn this wildcat into human! I trust you to do this well."

Genzai patted Seirin's shoulder once more.

"So to be clear, you want me to serve as a tutor for the princess?"

"Yes, exactly. Start with language, the alphabet... Not only speech, but reading and writing too. Also—and this is the most important thing—teach her some common sense first."

"Common sense? ...You mean manners? I had an audience with the Emperor as a child, but I'm not an expert on court etiquette."

Genzai shook his head. "No, not etiquette. I mean literal common sense."

"And I think that's enough talk for now. Go straight down the hall and to the south wing. I shall tell Ryouso to speak with Mirin, the head court lady, on your behalf."

Genzai took a brass bell from the desk and rang it.

Chiriririn!

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## Volume 1: The “Borderland Hero-Wannabe” Arc

### Chapter 1: First Job, Part 2/2

Chiriririn!

The bell rang with a clear sound and Seirin’s former guide, a thirty-something year old man in official’s robes, entered the room.

*I haven’t asked his name, but it should be Ryouso. A lower ranking official, but it looks like he’s His Excellency personal assistant.*

So the rumor about Genzai-sama promoting capable people regardless of their rank and social status was true after all, Seirin mused.

Meanwhile he watched Ryouso’s profile as the man discussed something with Genzai. His face was nearly expressionless, but when they finished talking, Ryouso turned to look at Seirin with something dangerously close to pity.

\*

As he followed Ryouso through a corridor from the main building to the South wing, Seirin pondered the Shan princess he would meet soon.

“Princess’s tutor, huh? A real princess!”

He couldn’t help feeling elated at this title. After all, he had only just become nineteen. As a child Seirin had been fairly popular with girls, but after failing the state exam repeatedly, everything changed. He hadn’t even talked to a girl properly for years now!

His heart beat faster.

He was going to meet a princess. And a thirteen year old one, at that!

In other words, somebody younger than him.

“Laoshi, what is this kanji?”

“Laoshi, this poem is so beautiful!”

She would say something like that, and he would respond:

“Let me see, that’s...”

“As expected from our princess, you’re very wise...”

Yeah, something like that.

What is he going to do, if princess turns out to be that adorable?!

And she has to be adorable, she wouldn't have been chosen as the Emperor's concubine otherwise.

That cute angel is going to be his pupil. What to do, oh, what to dooo???

Just when Seirin's heart seemed ready to overflow with such fancies, Ryouso suddenly stopped. Looked like they'd finally reached their destination.

Ryouso turned to Seirin. "No man can come any farther. Seirin-dono, do you have the ribbon His Excellency gave you earlier? Only those who have it can pass through this door."

"Even so, you must never come in unannounced. Please ring this to call the Head lady-in-waiting," Ryouso instructed, pointing at a brass bell on the side of the door. "Everything in the South dorms is under her jurisdiction. You must always follow her orders."

"I should ring it?"

"Yes, please."

Seirin took the bell.

Chiri...n.

But before he could properly ring it, the front door burst open and Seirin nearly collided with the woman who came through the doorway.

"Uwah!" He jumped back with an involuntary cry, but the woman remained totally unmoved by his actions.

"This is the princess's tutor. He arrived from the capital today."

After Ryouso's introduction, she turned to the still shocked Seirin and offered him a full courtly bow.

"Pleased to make your acquaintance. My name is Mirin, I am the Head lady-in-waiting."

Though there was a light trace of an accent in her voice, she spoke imperially, like someone from the capital.

She wore a lady-in-waiting uniform in Engi fashion, but her appearance was closer to that of Shan nomads than imperial citizens.

"Pleased to meet you, too. I'm Sen'ya Seirin..." Seirin bowed his head a little before continuing.

"This is the first time I've seen a Shan speaking Imperial around here." His words were frank.

To that, the lady—Mirin—replied:

"While this Mirin is of Shan, she has heard that the father of her father *were* an imperial soldier. He is dead now, but the mother of my father *tached* me the words." Her face remained stony.

"Oh..."

Seirin wasn't sure how to reply.

"You had it rough"? "That's amazing"? Nope, no good. Wouldn't do at all.

"I-I see..." he finally squeezed out. He managed to continue: "I'm glad. I wasn't worried about communication because I can speak the Shimur dialects, but Imperial is my native language so I'm glad there are Shan who speak it well."

"Then this Mirin is glad, too," she replied, once again without any change in her expression. "Your ribbon, please."

"Ribbon? Ah, this one. Here it is."

Seirin held out a jasper seal on a silk cord he'd received from Genzai. Mirin took it and pressed the seal to the entrance registry hanging beside the door. She verified the imprint and bowed.

"This seal is the original. Please, come after me."

Her expression was blank so Seirin couldn't be really sure, but it didn't seem like she was angry at him.

With a relieved sigh he followed Lady Mirin. She stopped before a door in the inner part of the Southern dorms.

"This is where Princess resides," the lady said, turning to Seirin. She continued in her curiously accented Imperial. "You've probably imagined a lot of things, because you *heard* this girl is a princess. Whatever hopes and delusions you have, better throw them all away now."

"No, no, never," Seirin protested. "I would never be so rude as to fantasize about Her Highness!"

He couldn't exactly confess that he'd been doing just that until very recently.

"Oh, really? Well, you seem rather impatient to meet her. However, you should give it up. Please consider the person living in this room a wildcat rather than a princess."

"What? A...wildcat?" Come to think of it, Genzai-sama said something similar as well.

That's just compared to the usual standards for imperial concubines, Seirin had thought. But even the Princess's people say the same thing. You don't usually call your master a wildcat, do you? What's really going on here?

"Perhaps it's better to brace myself, after all," Seirin decided. Gulping, he nodded at Mirin.

In response, she opened the door.

\*

"Yo, nii-chan."

That's the first thing Seirin heard when he stepped into the room.

The voice belonged to a girl sitting cross-legged in the centre of the room. A girl in very light clothes.

How light? Well...There's no way they could be any lighter.

Putting it simply, there was not a thread of clothing anywhere on her. She was naked as a baby.

It wasn't something any amount of imagination could have prepared him for. So Seirin could only mutter instinctively in Shimur.

"And that is... a princess...?"

"Yes, unfortunately she is the real thing," Mirin answered from beside him, speaking fluent Shimur as only a native speaker could. There was no expression on her face, but her words seemed to be sympathetic.

“Correct! I’m Mine, the youngest daughter of Shan’s chief Ishil,” the cross-legged girl responded cheerfully. She held a big cup in her right hand and raised it up high to greet Seirin.

“So, this bare-skinned, cross-legged, ox-milk drinking chibi is...a Princess?!”

“Yes, unfortunately, you are not mistaken,” Mirin repeated.

She said it twice, so it was probably true. But the so-called Princess was gulping milk from a cup and sitting stark naked on the floor.

“Hey, don’t call me a chibi!” The naked girl howled angrily. Her chest was non-existent, but her lungs seemed to be in great shape. That really was an excellent bellow.

“Also, it’s not ox, it’s sheep. Very tasty!” The chibi raised her cup again. If everything Seirin had heard about her was true, she certainly seemed to be the real deal. But he just couldn’t accept this.

After all, she was sitting on the floor in her birthday suit.

“Aaaaah. Whatever, just put on some clothes, will you!”

“Oh, don’t whine at every little thing. I’ve just returned from a long ride and it’s hot, so of course I took them off.”

So Seirin could see. Indeed, her riding clothes, and the towel she used to wipe her sweat, were strewn across the room. Of course, they were not properly folded.

“And I’m saying enough with sitting here cross-legged and naked! Stop it!” Seirin yelled without much thought for proper etiquette.

As if hearing it for the first time, the chibi looked down at herself. While not voluptuous, her body had gentle curves and there was no hair anywhere, except for her head and brows. Even between her legs.

Having noticed this particular fact, Seirin became red. He could see literally everything. Well, maybe not everything. He had no such experience, so he couldn’t be really sure. But anyway.

“What’s with all this exhibitionism?”

Mine herself didn’t seem to understand the problem.

“There’s no wind today. This is the best way to deal with the heat. Don’t you do the same?”

“Just. Wear. Your. Clothes!” Seirin shouted loudly from the bottom of his belly, and his voice echoed through entire Southern wing.

Mine closed her eyes and put the cup of sheep’s milk on a nearby table with a loud thump. Then she turned to Seirin and stared at him challengingly. In a haughty tone of voice, she declared, “How interesting! If you really want me to wear clothes, make me!”

At this moment the last remnants of rationality fled Seirin’s mind.

It didn’t matter that this naked girl was a princess, or an important guest, or even a symbol of his idol, Tsukihara Genzai’s, achievements. “I shan’t be rude,” his good sense had been whispering. But at this moment his good sense died with a bang. Entirely and without any hopes of returning.

“You hellspawn!” cursing in Shimur, he sprang at Mine.

“Ahahahaha. What? Can’t catch me? You’re too slow!”

And so the chase began.

“Damn!” Mine slipped from under his arm.

“Half-wit,” she yelled at Seirin’s back.

“What did you say, you bitch!” Mine dived between his legs.

At that she shouted excitedly.

“I said, try to catch me, if you can, you stupid hack!”

“I’m not a hack! I’m young!” As he screamed this, Seirin finally managed to drive Mine to a corner of the room.

“Now stay still! Listen to what I say and put on your clothes!”

“As if I would listen to anything you say! Greenhorn!” Mine spat back, jumping towards the wall. Kicking off the wall she vaulted right over Seirin’s head.

“Uwah!” He was being completely played by Mine, who was running up the walls and doing somersaults so high she reached the ceiling. She moved just like the real wildcat.

“Gyahaha! I’m here! I’m here!” The girl was running around and laughing happily when she stepped on her own scattered clothing. Stumbling, she slipped and fell back.

“Nyah!”

“Look out!” Just before her head hit the floor, Seirin dived forward and shielded the back of her head with his hands.

....Or he intended to, anyway. His hold couldn’t support the tumbling Mine and was crushed into the ground by her head.

There was a dull thump and Seirin felt sharp pain.

“It hurts!”

“Nyaan!”

Mine scowled at the pain and closed her eyes tightly. Still holding her head in his hands Seirin looked at her upturned face, panicking.

“Are you alright?” he asked, right when Mine opened her eyes. Her big blue eyes, widened in shock, seemed to suck him right in. After regarding his face intently for a while, Mine blinked three times and asked hesitantly.

“...So I’ve lost...?”

“Exactly!” Seirin gripped her hair to cut off any escape routes.

Making a face, she screamed. “Oi, that hurts! Let go! I won’t run! I’m not a coward! I’m the youngest, but I’m still the chief’s child!”

Seirin released her hair from his grasp. Mine stood up slowly and snorted derisively as she glared at him.

“There’s no choice... I’ll dress up. Be grateful.”

“What’s there to be grateful for? Normal people wear clothes all the time.”



"But this is the only way to deal with the heat. Mirin won't even let me open the windows to let wind in," Mine complained.

"Because you escape at the slightest chance," Mirin retorted. All this time she had been standing at the entrance and silently watching the chase.

"Even if I escape, I always come back later, don't I!"

"Yes, when you become hungry. Then you certainly deign to return."

"I also come back to sleep."

"Of course. I always know to come in when window shutters start to screech."

"You see, I always return. What more do you want? Quit being angry."

Mirin sighed a little and turned to Seirin. "Do you understand now why I called her a wildcat?"

Seirin nodded mutely.

Putting on her scattered clothing with a sour expression on her face, Mine asked, "Oi, youngster, what's your name?"

"It is Seirin, Sen'ya Seirin."

"Seirin? Sounds girly... Where did you learn our speech?"

"At the Capital's... market. Merchants from all around the world gather there. I heard them speak and I learned to talk like them."

Having finished putting on her underwear, Mine covered herself with a piece of cloth and nodded in understanding.

"Ah, that's why you're so good at swearing. You're the first from the Empire to call me a hellspawn or bitch."

Seirin made an apologetic bow. "About that, I'm very sorry. It somehow got out..."

"Don't apologize! I was glad!"

"What!?" Seirin raised his head.

Barring her white teeth, Mine looked at him and laughed.

"It was really nostalgic, like back at home. My family called me things like that every day!"

She finished dressing and stood before Seirin with her hands on her hips, staring fixedly at his face.

"You're an interesting man. The tutors who came before you tried to act all arrogant, but they were all sooo boring. Only you had the guts to scream at me and yank my hair! I like you! So welcome!"

Fully clothed, smiling Mine looked like any cute girl her age.

"So be it. I'm in your care now," Seirin said with a light bow.

It's going to be a difficult journey, he thought quietly to himself.

# (NanoDesu) A Translation of the Goshujinsama wa Yamanekohime Light Novel

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## **Volume 1: The “Borderland Hero-Wannabe” Arc**

### **Chapter 2: Fusetatsu, Part 2/1**

“Yei, welcome!” The owner greeted Seirin in heavily accented Imperial as he stepped through a curtain into the restaurant.

This place was called Airagu, a tiny eatery one street away from the Seikin, communal dorms behind the Administration building.

There were about 100 staff members working for the governor, most of whom were outside transfers. And nobody in their right mind would bring their family with them to such a backwater location, so almost everyone on staff lived alone.

People of high enough rank could afford a separate residence with their own locally-hired servants, but low-ranking employees who couldn’t had to camp down in communal dorms.

Though the Seikin was equipped with a decent kitchen, it was unbecoming of imperial officials to cook for themselves. Because of that, they all frequented Airagu for a proper meal or three.

Airagu’s owner was a pure-blood Shimur, who never had a bite of Imperial cuisine his whole life. However, with the help of his customers’ advice, he managed to improve the taste of his food over the years.

Seirin looked around the store. It wasn’t very wide. There were eight tables for six persons each. On Seirin’s right was the kitchen, separated from the main hall by a block of wood that could serve as an eating place as well.

Almost all the seats were full, but some men, having an after-meal chat, noticed Seirin’s predicament. With a glance at each other, they stood up.

“You can sit here. We’ve already finished our food, so feel free.”

“Th-thanks,” Seirin nodded gratefully. As soon as he took the seat, a woman, probably a hostess, came over.

“What you order?” she asked.

“Um, what do you usually have on menu?”

Hearing that, the smiling hostess nodded once. “Ok, we have usual.”

“Wait, no, not usual, *usually*...”

“Yes yes, one usual. No need to worry. Dear, we have a usual!” she shouted to the chef before turning to leave.

“But...”

A thin man around Seirin's age or a bit older laughed at his indignation. He was sitting behind Seirin and drinking a milk-like beverage.

"Don't worry" he said. "Their usual is delicious. And also cheap. It's better than some pricey taverns'."

His words were clear, with no trace of an accent. He enunciated like the imperial elite, rolling his r's just enough.

"You... came from the Capital, didn't you?"

The young man widened his eyes. "How did you...?"

"Ah, sorry, it's just... You talk like somebody from the capital."

"And you can tell just from the way I speak?"

"Yes, I lived there for all of my life too. I played a lot at Nishiki Koji as a child."

"Impressive. You have some good ears on you. Say, it's uncomfortable talking back by back, so mind if I join you at the table?"

For Seirin, who has already resigned himself to a lonely meal, there was no reason to refuse. The man took his plate and narrow jar of the milky-white drink and sat on the opposite side. While he moved, Seirin caught a whiff of alcohol.

So this person was actually drinking. But however you looked at it, there was only milk in the jar...

The man before Seirin introduced himself as Kou Fusetatsu, 21 years old.

"That's a remarkable name," Seirin commented admiringly, but Fusetatsu brushed off the praise.

Actually, my real name is Shinryuu Sento, but due to certain circumstances I had to change it." He looked at Seirin with curious eyes. "You're not from here either, are you?"

"Sorry, I'm—"

But Fusetatsu interrupted Seirin's introduction, pointing at him with his index finger.

"Wait a little, please. It's really hard for me to accept that you saw through my disguise so easily. It's my turn to guess your identity. Any objections?"

"None."





Just as Seirin smilingly nodded his assent, the hostess came around with a tray.

“Yei! The Usual’s ready!”

One by one, she placed various plates before Seirin. First came a big bowl of vegetable stew with thinly cut pieces of meat—lamb, it seemed—then something like fried spring rolls, followed by thick egg drop soup, and finally rice with

barley.

“Whoah, looks tasty!” Seirin’s eyes lit up at the sight

“Are you all right with lamb?” Fusetatsu asked worriedly, watching him.

“Yeah, I have nothing against it. Why?”

“Because ‘meat’ means ‘lamb’ around here. You won’t see pork or beef anywhere. Even chicken is a delicacy, for heaven’s sake. If you don’t eat lamb, you may as well starve, starting tomorrow.

“So that’s how it is...” Seirin mumbled, stuffing his mouth with the stew.

Although the meat stank quite a bit, the smell was well hidden by the taste of peanut oil and fragrant herbs mixed in with the vegetables. Moreover, the simple seasoning of salt enhanced the taste of the meat itself, and made the lamb much more delicious

“That’s heavenly! You can eat it every day and not get tired of it!

Fusetatsu smiled happily at his excitement.

“I’m glad. Today the owner was generous with the seasoning, because the salt merchants finally came to town. Until yesterday everything’s been a bit bland.”

“Right, there was a cart with salt in my caravan. The sacks were piled so high, it was like a mountain. And the soldiers guarding it drove away anyone who got close. I honestly thought they were transporting money at first...”

“True—no salt, no strength,” Fusetatsu grinned. “Especially true if you’re going to serve as princess Mine’s new tutor. You won’t last long without a proper meal, because every day with her is like a battle. So eat up, while you can.”

Seirin choked on his rice. He hurriedly grasped a cup and gulped down the juice in it.

That dislodged the lump in his throat, and Seirin let out a big sigh when the food settled in his stomach properly.

“How did you guess about me being a tutor...?”

“Eh, that was an easy one. First, you’re not an official. Those men who gave you their seats? They’re from administration, and their status isn’t that high.

“If you were an official fresh from the Capital, they would have behaved more formally. Because anyone from the Capital is an elite.

“Were you a merchant, you would go to the tavern on Suzaku street, across the merchant’s inn. You wouldn’t have to come here.

“So, neither a merchant nor an official. Which leaves us with but one possibility: you’re in the personal employment of Tart’s governor, Tsukihara Genzai. But he would usually hire local people for his servants. It’s cheaper and also more convenient because they know the land. If he called you here all the way from the Capital, that can only mean he needed somebody with specific skills. And you realized my origins just from hearing me speak, so your abilities must lie with languages.

“Why would Tsukihara Genzai need a language expert? You can’t be anyone except a tutor for a certain wildcat princess, residing in the Southern wing of the Governor’s office.”

Pausing, he let out a smirk and continued.



“And there’s your proof. The end.”

“A-Amazing! Fusetatsu-san’s so smart!”

Throwing a glance at the impressed Seirin, he poured himself more milk from the jar and gulped it down.

“It’s beginner level,” he said a little bashfully. “No need to sound so excited.”

“Well, I believe clever people deserve respect... After all, I’m just a dead last, who failed the state exam many times.” Scratching his head in embarrassment, the young man continued. “So my name’s Seirin, Sen’ya Seirin. I’m only nineteen, so that makes Fusetatsu-san two years older than me, give or take.

“I failed the exams repeatedly and went to wander around the city market. But then father heard that His Excellency Tsukihara Genzai is looking for a translator. So he told me to go try for the job.

“I thought I would fail for sure—Tsukihara Genzai is very popular with the capital citizens, he’s their hero, y’know—but in the end, I decided to try my luck. And somehow I got hired...”

Giving a short nod, he continued.

“That’s how I came to be sitting here before you now. Pleased to make your acquaintance.”

Smiling, Fusetatsu held out a cup with milk in it.

“Come, enough with formalities. We’re the only two young men from the Capital in all of Tart at the moment. A fine reason to get along from now on, I should think. Let’s drink for that.”

He poured the tall jar’s contents into Seirin’s cup. However you looked at it, it seemed to be plain milk...

But for some reason it had a strong, strange odour. Part sour, part sweet and somewhat reminiscent of cows.

“What is it?” – Seirin asked.

“Trust me, just try it. Drinking this is a good way to get along with Shimur.”

*Get along with Shimur? Meaning things might go smoother with princess Mine?*

Seirin recalled her image from when he met her in the Southern dorms. Flat chest, thin arms and legs. *She’s not in the least appealing, except for those pretty, wide blue eyes.*

Seirin shook himself out of his idle musings and drained the cup in one gulp. At the first mouthful of the white liquid he felt sourness permeating his mouth, stabbing at his taste buds. He swallowed and felt the cheese-like smell of curdled milk enter his nose.

*Uwah, what is this???*

Fusetatsu laughed at his reflexive grimace.

“It’s kumis. You let mare’s milk ferment until it becomes mildly alcoholic. Very sour and smells terribly. May be near undrinkable for amateurs, but once you get used to it, the taste’s really good.

“Don’t know why, but this drink’s also good for the body. Better alternative to wine, health-wise.”

“Anybody who can drink *that* without flinching has to be healthy, yeah.”

In response to the scowling Seirin, Fusetatsu answered seriously.

"To tell the truth, I love alcohol. Because of that I lost my way in life. But since I started drinking kumis, it's like the damage wrought by wine has been lessening gradually. I still get hungover, but it passes more easily.

"Lost your way in life? What are you talking about, you're too young for that!"

"After we turn twenty we're all just ordinary men. You're from the Capital, you have to have heard of Rengai school."

Seirin stared at him in wonder.

"By Rengai you mean that Rengai – the one that's a legendary school for genius children from all over the Empire? I've heard that among its graduates there are people who passed the Imperial exams at sixteen!"

"Oh, you're talking about Sawagi Enmei. He's now serving in the ministry of law. My underclassman."

"Underclassman? But that means..."

To Seirin's genuine amazement, Fusetatsu could only answer self-derisively.

"That's right. I'm also one of the famed Rengai students. They called me a wunderkind when I was ten. By twelve I'd already memorized all the law books. At fourteen I argued politics with my teachers. Some thought my genius was legendary.

"However, the spring I became fifteen, my inner struggles began. The meaning of my existence. The world's existence. Human life and death. What kind of prodigy was I, if I didn't know the answers to such questions? I didn't understand anything at all!

"After series of sleepless nights, still struggling with my dilemma, I went out to Nishiki koji. While wandering in search of a place to eat, I saw a seventy-something year old man whistling happily under his nose and drinking wine. I didn't know wine. Knew about it, but not once had I tried the drink itself.

"I begged the old man to let me have a taste.

"It wasn't exceptional wine or anything. Just a cheap swill you can buy anywhere in Nishiki koji. But that first taste of sake stole my soul that day. 'How can there exist something so delicious in the world!' I thought.

"That day, on the eve of my fifteenth spring, I decided to devote my life to wine."

"That's why I came to Tart – to chase after the mythical 'fire water,' a drink so strong it burns you like fire when you consume it. It's rumored to be produced here, in the Northern province.

"And I guess I also had to run away, so I came here... Yeah, something like that."

"Run away? From whom? An enemy? An official?"

"Better quit while you're still ahead. I won't tell you. It's a terrible organization I am hiding from. Demons. They tend to turn people into beasts, slowly ridding them of their soul and dignity. To escape them I had to run as far as Tart."

Seirin swallowed heavily at the sight of Fusetatsu's seriousness.

"Can there really be somebody so terrible in the Engi Empire?"

"Yes, such people really do exist. It's a secret organization. Their headquarters are in the West, near Danskaal. But they have several hundred operatives undercover in the Empire as well. They're also very persistent. No matter how long you keep running away, they always come after you. So finally I came to Tart. They'll probably leave me be for a while, if it's here."



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## **Volume 1: The “Borderland Hero-Wannabe” Arc**

### **Chapter 2: Fusetatsu, Part 2/2**

Right when he poured himself more kumis, a soldier in light plate armor and a helmet walked in leisurely.

This man was solidly built, as was characteristic of people whose trade depended on strength and stamina. He looked around the place, paying special attention to customers’ faces.

*He seems to be searching for somebody. Is he from police patrol? Could it be, somebody’s on the run, and they’ve followed his trail to Tart?*

Thinking that, Seirin looked at the soldier one more time and met his stare.

*What?*

There was no time to be surprised, though. The soldier briskly walked up to their table and turned to Fusetatsu. He took his helmet off and bowed his head before him.

“Aniki! So this is where you’ve been hiding all this time!”

The soldier with a white-toothed smile was still young... The same age as Fusetatsu, or maybe a bit older.

“What? Ah, Ryuuhi. Aren’t you in the middle of work?”

The man called Ryuuhi shook his head.

“No, I’m on my way home, actually. Had an early shift, so I came here straight from the station.”

“You should leave your armor at home! You scare the customers when you’re in uniform.”

“Haha, yeah, there’s that. I just really wanted to have a drink with you as soon as possible. When you drink wine with smart people, you become smarter as well, that’s what I think”.

Ryuuhi plopped into a chair next to Fusetatsu and yelled out his order.

“Hey! I’ll have the same as Fusetatsu-aniki!”

“Aiyo!”

Ryuuhi smiled happily at the hostess who came out of the kitchen to answer him, before turning to glare suspiciously at Seirin.

“Aniki... Who’s the guy?”

“Ah, that’s Sen’ya Seirin, he’s in His Excellency’s personal employment. He’s fresh from the capital, came to serve

as that Wildcat princess's tutor."

Ryuuhi opened his eyes wide in surprise.

"How unexpected! So this person is a *sensei* as well?"

"That's right. He's still young, but a full-fledged teacher already. You should pay him proper respect."

"Well, that goes without saying!"

The serious-looking Ryuuhi faced Seirin and bowed.

"I'm called Seigou Ryuuhi, head of a ten man unit in the Tart's garrison. Twenty three years old, been a soldier for five years, and pleased to make your acquaintance!"

"Ah, thank you for introduction. I'm Sen'ya Seirin. I don't mind if you just call me Seirin, as I'm actually four years younger than you."

But Ryuuhi only shook his head at Seirin's words.

"No, no, no, that won't do. I really admire educated people. Aniki is still aniki, no matter the age. Take Fusetatsu, for example. I think of him as someone two years older since I respect him so much."

"That's right," Fusetatsu laughed, poking at his stew. "Your attitude towards Seirin reminds me of our first meeting. You said the same thing to me then."

Ryuuhi nodded gravely.

"Yeah, meeting you made me sure of my beliefs. 'That guy's younger than me, but smarter. He must be a great scholar of some sort. Best to listen to him!' That's what I thought."

Fusetatsu tilted his head.

"I recall meeting you here, but... Did I do something then? I'd shown off for you or won a dispute..."

"No way, Aniki, have you forgotten already? I came to close my drinking tab, remember?"

"Right, they delivered your pay from the capital, so you practically flew here to pay the bill."

"And Aniki immediately calculated the sum in his head. Without anything, just – papapam – and he told me how much to pay. The hostess spent a long time counting on the abacus and got the same number in the end. Everyone was so shocked!"

"Yes, yes, I remember it now. It's simple arithmetic. Sum up the tab, then subtract it from the wages. That's no cause for admiration."

Ryuuhi shook his head vigorously.

"Aniki, that's not true! We soldiers are good at using our fists, not our heads! You only need to be strong to get promoted. Be it the head of a fifty man unit or a hundred man unit, it's all the same. If you can count past twenty, you're like a god already!"

"Why twenty, though?"

"Well, that's easy," Ryuuhi answered seriously. "You have only ten fingers and ten toes."



“What about your eyes and your mouth? That’s three more if you use them,” Seirin joked. However, the soldier started counting in earnest.

“Ten, if you use your fingers. Twenty with toes. Left eye, twenty one. Right eye, twenty two. Mouth, twenty three... Wow, there’s really three more that way!”

Ryuuhi stared at Seirin excitedly, with admiration in his eyes.

“You’re a genius! Sorry, but will you allow me to call you my older brother, after all?”

Seirin was taken aback by this reaction. He thought Ryuuhi had actually been in on the joke before.

“B-but...”

Fusetatsu shrugged at his troubled expression.

“Don’t make such a long face, Ryuuhi means it seriously. Also, he’s a rare case among his peers. Not many in the army think that seeking knowledge is admirable. Do you know why?”

“... ‘The military man is to achieve respect through his skills with the sword, not through books’... Something like that?”

“Exactly. The law passed by the third emperor states that any promotion inside the military is to be based on this principle. Even if you are well-read, it won’t do you any good. Why learn any letters and numbers? Better to spend your time training. Do a mock battle or learn to split roof tiles with your bare hands, it’ll get you further in life.”

Fusetatsu pointed at the small pot of stew on the table.

“Imagine this pot is the enemy. Seirin, what tactic would you use to attack it?”

“Me? Well, first I would have some troops lie in wait on the enemy’s path of retreat. Then I would attack from the other three sides. When the enemy withdrew, my soldiers would cut it down. A retreating army is vulnerable, so even a small number of troops would be enough to deal with it.”

Fusetatsu smirked.

“I’ll award you thirty points for that.”

“It’s not that bad of a plan, is it?”

Seirin was puzzled. Still smirking, Fusetatsu answered.

“True, it’ll work, but only if you find a soldier who is as smart as you. For the Imperial army, this plan is too complicated. It assumes they’re able to think ahead. No, the Engi military does things another way.”

Fusetatsu brought some jars and sake cups on plates to surround the pot.

“You surround the enemy en masse and crush it... The victory is decided by numbers. That’s a hundred point answer.”

“What? That can hardly be considered a valid battle plan!”

“Wrong. It’s exactly the plan our military uses. Charge straight at the enemy in big numbers. The simplest plan ever. Everybody from the general to the common foot soldier can understand it.

They all think the same thing: gather strong people together and you’ll win. That’s how our dear imperial army

operates.”

“How the hell have we managed to win up until now...?”

In response to Seirin’s disappointment, Fusetatsu pointed at the tableware around the pot.

“I’ve shown you already. Think about it. As long as an army is big enough to overwhelm the enemy, the Empire won’t lose. ..Some people in the government thought that this way of doing things was outdated, so they started reforming the military as Tsukihara Genzai led the way. But...”

“...But he got exiled to the border and that was the end of the matter.”

“I think his return to the Capital is coming closer. However you look at it, an alliance with the Shan clan is a big deal. Even his opposition in the government can’t ignore that kind of achievement.”

He gulped down another cup of kumis.

“By the way, there’s this rumor circulating about how Genzai-sama is returning to the Capital soon,” Ryuuhi remarked offhandedly from beside Fusetatsu.

“What? Where did you hear that?!”

“Wait, it’s just a rumor...” he explained hurriedly to his shocked friend. “I don’t know the details myself, but people are talking about a new governor. If the new governor comes, that means the current one – Tsukihara Genzai – has to go away, right?”

“Well, yes, but...”

Fusetatsu paused to look at Seirin.

“...What will happen to your job?”

“Give me a break! It hasn’t even been a day since I came here!”

\*

As Seirin was busy fighting back tears, a certain conversation took place in the Governor’s palace.

“Princess? Are you listening to me?”

Inside the Southern dorms Mirin was trying to talk to Mine as she bit into her lamb steak.

“Mohyuhihyu mohaha, homo hihe”

“...This Mirin fails to understand the meaning of your words.”

Although she said so, Mirin could make an educated guess or two. One had just look at how the princess frowned while taking another big bite of her meal.

“Despite that, I have to note that unless I approach you during the meal, I won’t be able to find you anywhere. This is an important conversation, so please listen to what this Mirin has to say.”

“Hyomumumu, homumumu. Mume mumu momo!”

“Again, your humble servant fails to grasp what you are talking about.

“However, my princess, you only deign me with your presence after I inform you quite loudly that a meal has been prepared. I have been trying to talk to you since you woke up this morning, asking for your attention until my voice became hoarse from the effort. You turned a deaf ear to my pleas and ran off to play with the horses as soon as you were able to.

“And yet the moment I mention food, you hurry back faster than any horse. Such a perfect example of a wildcat, you are!”

Mirin scolded her mistress emotionlessly. It occurred to her that she was overstepping the boundaries of polite behaviour quite a bit, but then again it was rather useless to behave respectfully towards someone, who **absolutely, categorically, straight out** ignored such matters. Lack of etiquette didn’t hinder Mirin in accomplishing her duties, and so she had continued to serve the princess faithfully for eight years already.

Mine continued gnawing on her meat, chewing noisily while Mirin spoke. She swallowed as her maid went on exclaiming about wildcats.

“Isn’t today’s lamb overcooked?!”

“I am aghast at what I hear from this wildcat! If you are finished with your food, listen to what I have to say like any civilized person would!”

“What’re you talking about! That’s important. They overcooked the meat! Steaks should be raw, that’s when they’re delicious!”

“Are you a princess or a cat? For once somebody from the capital was taking you seriously, despite your behaviour! That is the first time a tutor is willing to try doing his job properly for your sake. Don’t ridicule him so much, will you?” Mirin lectured dispassionately.

The handmaiden was distantly related to Shan’s chief Ishil. Of course, in a tribe everybody was related to everybody else in some way, but in Mirin’s case she was eight people away from the chief. That’s what allowed her to call herself a distant relative.

Her duty was to look after the chief’s youngest child, princess Mine. Normally, being a handmaiden meant she needed to arrange dresses for the princess and help with her make-up. In truth, though...

...She was responsible for feeding the wildcat.

However, when she nonchalantly declared that to her family during one of her visits, her parents couldn’t decide between fainting and scolding their child for her impertinence.

Well, anyway.

“This young man came all the way from the capital to teach you. Don’t you dare send this one home crying, I beg of you!”

The first one ran away after only half a day with Mine. Mirin hadn’t even seen his face. Nobody knew what happened during his audience with the princess. The girl herself said only that the guy was a bore.

*Just what kind of “interesting” things had she done to the man?*

Ultimately, the truth remained unknown.

But the tutor after the first, his face Mirin knew. On his second day he came out covered in bruises and crying

pathetically. He bolted for the capital immediately.

Again, nobody knew what had really happened that day. And Mine only complained the tutor was dull.

Just how did the wildcat “entertain” herself, Mirin wondered. Alas, the answer remained a mystery.

And the teacher who came today was the third one.

“If I may be so bold, Princess, wait at least five days before getting rid of your tutor. If you do it earlier, Ishil-sama’s pride will be at stake. It has nothing to do with me, of course, but it should matter to you. So please refrain from anything “interesting” and “entertaining” for now.”

Mine completely ignored her maid’s admonition. There were smudges of grease on her face.

“I was right, they did overcook the steak, yeah...” she muttered.

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## **Volume 1: The “Borderland Hero-Wannabe” Arc**

### **Chapter 3: The treasure of Shimur, Part 1/3**

“Boring, boring, so booooooring!”

Mine suddenly screamed, pushing away from the desk. She collapsed on the floor.

“Laoshi is teaching you easy phrases first to help you remember simple words. It is a very straightforward matter: your only task is to repeat what you hear from the esteemed tutor,” Mirin chided from the side.

Mine just looked up at Mirin from her position on the floor.

“I am neither a child, nor a parrot. I don’t want to say something stupid like ‘Hel-lo,’ ‘Hel-lo,’ ‘Good – weather – today,’ ‘Good – weather – today’ over and over!”

“We learn by practicing.”

And wasn’t it the truth. If only Mine could understand this simple fact. Then, she wouldn’t have been whining so much. The princess thrashed her legs, screaming again.

“I. Am. Bored! Who cares if I don’t know some words or letters?!” She raised her head to look at her bewildered teacher.

“Oi, Seirin. Answer me. Why do I need to learn languages in the first place? Letters can’t make a horse run faster, can they? And words can’t help sheep give birth to more lambs. So what’s the use in remembering all this stuff?”

“Hm, let me think. It is true that language can’t make horses faster or help sheep reproduce... But language lets you talk to many different people and allows you to read lots of different books. When you do this, you get to know a lot of interesting things.”

At Seirin’s words Mine bounced up, bending forward over the table.

“Interesting things? Like what? Tell me, tell me!”

He pointed a finger at her.

“Like you. Meeting someone like you is certainly an interesting experience.”

“..Nya?” Judging by her face, Mine didn’t understand.

She fell silent, puzzling over it for a while. Then, coming to some kind of a conclusion, the princess cried out indignantlly.

"Whaaaat! Are you implying my face is strange?"

'That's not what I was saying. Interesting, not strange. Like meeting new people and starting conversations with them, or doing things you've never tried before. That kind of interesting.'

"Nyu..?"

Mine fell silent again, thinking about it.

"True, it's fun, when you ride a horse somewhere you've never been before. Even if you go somewhere familiar and take the same road you always take, it is still interesting. 'Cause you might always find something new on the way."

"Exactly." Seirin nodded his assent.

"Hmmm..." Mine drawled with a smile in response to his words.

*Wait, that's...*

Mirin had a bad feeling about this, though it seemed Seirin hadn't noticed anything suspicious.

"Seirin, have you ever gone on a long horse ride?"

"What? No, I haven't. I don't even know how to ride a horse."

Mine's big blue eyes widened in shock. "Never? Young people these days! What have you been doing with your life?! How can I call somebody like that laoshi! You blockhead!"

That got Seirin irritated. "In the Capital no one will make fun of you for not being able to ride a horse," he retorted.

"We're in Tart, not the Capital! Here even children can ride! When in Wu and all that! I won't listen to anything you say until you learn how to ride! So close your books and follow me!"

"Follow you... Where to?"

"What are you talking about! We're going for a ride! It'll be fun!"

"That's impossible. You're speaking to a man who never rode a horse in his life! Fun, it is definitely not!"

Watching Seirin panic, Mine smirked evilly.

"Oh, I see... And here I thought I heard someone say doing things you've never tried before is interesting... Were you lying, then?"

Seirin floundered at her comeback.

"Ah, well... um..."

The princess stood up abruptly.

"Quit your muttering, let's go! Weather's good today too! Perfect for a horse ride!"

"Wa-wa-wait! Princess, wait a minute, please!" Seirin cried as Mine pulled him by his wrist.

"That's it, we're going! Follow me!"

"Uwaaah!"

Despite his protests, Princess forcibly dragged her tutor out of the room.

Observing her charge's exuberance and Seirin, who was about to cry, Mirin calmly waved her hand at them both.

"Your loss, respected teacher. This Mirin will await your safe return," she said matter-of-factly.

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About fifteen minutes later, Mine and Seirin slowly rode up to a hill not far from Tart. They were on the same white horse with the princess handling the reins. As a complete novice, Seirin sat behind her.

Sharing the horse meant they had to be very close. Seirin clung to Mine's back, his hands holding onto her waist.

The sensation of the girl's thin waist, the softness of baby fat, the movement of muscles under his palms – all of that made Seirin think.

*When she ordered me to get on the horse, I didn't know what to expect. But she really is the nomad princess. It is like she's talking to the horse, that's how complete her mastery over it is.*

Ignorant of the young man's regard, Mine gazed towards the west, where cirrus clouds hovered right above the horizon. Nothing else cluttered the blue, exposing the early summer sky to her eyes.

Perhaps because of the thin highland air, both distant mountains and nearby hills could be seen in sharp relief.

"O-kay, today weather will stay good until the night."

"How do you know?"

"You just have to look to the west! The skies will be clear all day today!"

"A-ah, really?"

In essence, climates change from the west. Here on the northern plateau you could see very far in that direction. So people here just had to look the right way to predict the weather.

Seirin knew this intellectually, but in the Capital he seldom watched the skies, so he had paid little attention to such trivia.

"Got it, didn't you? Then we should hurry forward. First, let's go to the Tarim river. I'll show you Shimur treasures!"

That surprised Seirin.

*Shimur treasures? What could that be? This girl is a princess, after all... Maybe she heard about some hidden stash of enormous riches from her father the tribe-chief... What if I am about to become a very rich man?*

Mine had no way to know of Seirin's wicked thoughts. Turning to face him, she continued.

"Hold on tight! Don't you dare fall off like last time. That was pitiful!"

"What do you mean hold..?!"

Seirin had no chance to finish the question, as the princess spurred on her steed. The white horse sped to a gallop.

The young man couldn't help but cry out from the sudden change of speed.



“Wah! It’s shaking. I’m going to fall, I’m going to fall!”

“Of course it is, we are galloping. Now lift your bottom to properly put your weight on the stirrups.”

“G-Got it!”

“Don’t just say it, do it!” – Mine yelled at Seirin, who raised his hips a bit. “Go, go!” She took a whip to the horse’s side, so it ran even faster.

“Uwaaaah!”

“Don’t whine!”

And so the horse ran, with Seirin wailing all the way.

Half an hour later, on the meadow near the bank of Tarim River, Seirin lay face-down, breathing heavily and groaning.

“Haa... haaa... Uhn...”

When you are on horseback, you sway constantly. You can sit in the saddle on your backbones, but this strains the inner part of your thighs, as you use these muscles to stay astride.

People don’t use these muscles much ordinarily, so when they are suddenly forced to exercise them for a prolonged period of time... Well, to put it simply, it’s hell.

What’s more, if you dare to relax your thighs, you fall off. Falling off a running horse, you face concussion and sprains in the best case and broken bones if you’re unlucky. And, if you have the worst luck, you might even break your neck or get your intestines pierced by a broken rib, and die.

Seirin, who was finally freed from the torture of horseback riding, simply enjoyed the fact that he was still alive.

He muttered ecstatically through his heavy breathing.

“Legs... don’t work... But I’m still...among the living...”

Mine sat cross-legged beside him, the way she did the first time they met.

“Good grief, man! There has to be a limit to your clumsiness. You cried all the way here,” she said disgustedly.

“Did... not... Maybe screamed... a little,” Seirin argued weakly.

Mine made a face.

“Don’t nitpick! Crying or screaming, it’s all the same in the end! You Imperials... Especially those of you from the Capital, why are you always fussing about one thing or another?”

*Can it be that I am actually a bore...? It certainly sounds so.*

Mine continued.

“Not Genzai, but all the other Capital citizens! The official who came to Shan last year, he recorded the number of our horses, sheep, everything. And he came again this year and was so angry, when the numbers didn’t match!”

“Horses and sheep, they’re all living beings. They may fall ill and die, or there may be new offspring, so of course, numbers change. And that official told us to get the numbers to match... How big of an idiot is he?!”

Seirin recalled Genzai's words.

That official, he probably trusted his documents more than reality. Was that what His Excellency meant, when he said that some people become slaves to the bureaucracy only to be crushed by the paperwork?